DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 165 CS 212 400

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TITLE A View to Writing: The Effectiveness of ITV as a Model for Process Writing.
PUB DATE Feb 89
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Educational Research Association (Savannah, GA, February 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Grade 2; Instructional Effectiveness; *Instructional Films; Primary Education; Program Evaluation; Writing Assignments; *Writing Improvement; *Writing Instruction; Writing Processes; Writing Research; *Writing Skills; Writing Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Childrens Writing; New York (Putnam County); *Process Approach (Writing); Writing Development; *Writing Models

ABSTRACT

A study evaluated the effectiveness of an Instructional Television Program (ITV) designed to model and teach aspects of process writing to second-grade children. Two second-grade teachers and their students (each class contained 24 children) comprised the experimental groups; one second-grade teacher and 24 students comprised the control group. The experimental groups viewed the ITV program and completed worksheets and writing assignments designed to measure whether they had met specific program objectives. The control group completed worksheets and writing assignments but did not view the ITV programs. Program objectives were categorized as either measuring pre-writing, drafting, or print conventions. Results indicated a significant difference between the experimental groups' and the control group's performance on tests of new concepts introduced in the ITV programs. Interview data indicated that teachers viewed the ITV programs as instructional supports for them and highly motivating to children. (One table of data is included and 15 references are attached.) (Author/MG)

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A View to Writing: The Effectiveness of ITV as a Model for Process Writing

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Paper presented at Eastern Educational Research Association

Savannah, Georgia, February 1989

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Abstract

The effectiveness of an Instructional Television Program (ITV), designed to model and teach aspects of process writing to second grade children, was evaluated. Two second grade teachers and their students comprised the experimental group; one second grade teacher and her students comprised the control group. The experimental groups viewed the ITV program and completed worksheets and writing assignments designed to measure whether they had met specific program objectives. The control group completed worksheets and writing assignments but did not view the ITV programs. Program objectives were categorized as either measuring pre-writing, drafting or print conventions. Test data and writing assignments were scored. Chi square analysis indicated a significant difference between the experimental groups' and the control group's performance on tests of new concepts introduced in the ITV programs. Interview data suggested that teachers viewed the ITV programs as instructional supports for them and highly motivating to children. Additional data is reported about advantages of structuring writing tasks for children.

A View to Writing: The Effectiveness of ITV as a Model for Process Writing

Learning to write continues to be a major educational problem in the United States. In spite of individual States' and schools' programs in which the teaching of writing is addressed, some 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate.

The work of Graves (1983) and Calkins (1985) provided educators with a schema for teaching writing as a process rather than a product. Sulzby (1983), Clay (1975), and Ferreiro (1982) demonstrated that preschool children are writers and use writing for communication even though the writing does not portray conventional spelling and letter forms. It is important to tap, at school entrance, the natural writing abilities of children and to extend and expand these abilities to maintain the concept of writing as a form of communication. This goal can be accomplished through process writing instruction; however, classroom teachers must be well trained in this process.

Realizing the difficulty of implementing a process approach to writing Graves (1983) and Calkins (1985) have tried to "inservice" teachers through their texts and process writing workshops. While this has been an effective approach, daily classroom implementation is often based on scanty and blurred recall of theories and processes presented in workshops. There is a need for on-site help for teachers and students to effectively use process writing. At the present time schools are seeking resources to provide such support. ITV may be an appropriate and effective medium for such support.

Instructional Television (ITV) also appears to be an instructional medium well suited to addressing the cognitive and affective writing needs of teachers and children. American children are introduced to TV as an entertainment source well before school age. What they learn and the nature of their cognitive processing while viewing TV has been a concern of educators (NIMH, 1982). However, differences must be drawn between commercial TV viewing, which is primarily designed for entertainment and ITV, which is designed as an adjunct to classroom instruction.

Instructional TV has been found to be an effective learning medium by Choate (1988), Agency for Instructional Technology (1982), and Sanders et al. (1982). Reports of research based on specific ITV series indicate that this instructional medium does have impact on the curriculum but the school and classroom context influences its use (Sanders & Sonnad, 1982). Webb (1982) reported more use of effective reading techniques, specific skills and comprehension, e.g., Main Idea among students who systematically viewed an ITV program on reading than a control group not involved in the viewing. Other research reports no consistent difference in learning outcomes from ITV or teacher instruction (Kumato, 1960; O'Bryan, 1980). Research (Field & Anderson, 1985) in which children's learning from entertainment TV was studied suggests that children use strategies which are based in part on their understanding of the situation demands. The children were reported to modify their viewing behaviors in response to specific instructions for learning. Thus, it appears that children learn from TV if directions for viewing are given and

if they understand the nature of the task. Given these stipulations, ITV might well be a medium through which process writing could be implemented for student learning and also used as "on-site" help for the teacher.

A review of the research regarding the use of ITV for classroom instruction reports the following categories as being most important for effective utilization: (1) availability of equipment and program scheduling (MacIntyre, 1983; Maryland Utilization Report, 1986). (2) Attitudes of teachers and administrators (Maryland Utilization Report, 1986). (3) The teaching process as an adjunct to the series (Sanders, 1983). (4) Student attitudes and expectations toward TV as a learning medium (Sanders, 1983).

This research was conducted to determine the effectiveness of an ITV program, Fins, Feathers and Fur, which was designed to model process writing and to teach several writing conventions to primary grade children. Based on previous research regarding effective utilization several questions were addressed. Specifically, as a result of viewing specific programs in the video series, Fins, Feathers and Fur:

1. Will children demonstrate their learning of the specific ITV program objectives?

2. Will the use of ITV act as a writing motivator and instructional guide for children and teachers?

3. What aspects of this ITV program are most valuable for instruction?

4. Will teachers report ITV to be an effective instructional tool?

PROCEDURE

Subjects

Three second grade teachers from Carmel Central School agreed to participate in this study. The classrooms were housed in one primary school in the Carmel Central School District. Based on a heterogeneous ability grouping arrangement, each classroom contained 24 children. Therefore, children in both the experimental and control groups can be considered to reflect similar ranges of ability and background. Because of absence during video presentation and subsequent completion of test items, data will be reported based on the complete records of 16 children in experimental classroom A, 17 in experimental classroom B, and 17 in control classroom C.

Carmel Central School District lies approximately 60 miles north of New York City in Putnam County with a total school population, K-12, of 4,175 pupils. Although rated as a rural district, in recent years a large number of single family dwellings, town houses and condominiums have changed the characteristics of the area so that it now resembles a suburban rather than a rural area. Family incomes range from low socio-economic levels through middle incomes. Family occupations include those of farming, blue collar factory labor and professional business. The teachers in this district are experienced teachers with 15-20 years as the mean number of years teaching. Prior to the introduction of this research, all of the teachers in this study had participated in one inservice session on process writing. Therefore they were familiar with the terms and aspects of process writing such as brainstorming,

drafting, revision, editing and publishing.

Method

This researcher initiated the study by presenting two writing workshops designed to demonstrate aspects of process writing that were highlighted on this ITV program. In addition, one instructional session was given regarding the use of this ITV program, Fins, Feathers and Fur in the classroom. Teachers who agreed to participate in the study were given a Fins, Feathers and Fur teacher's guide, Fins, Feathers and Fur utilization packet and worksheets that were developed by this experimenter to test specific objectives of each program.

Two second grade teachers agreed to the experimental conditions and were given the following instructions: (1) obtain a pre-writing sample from the children prior to showing any videotapes. (2) Introduce each video program by using one of the suggested pre-viewing activities in the teacher's guide. (3) Show the videotaped programs twice per lesson. (4) Ask children to complete the program worksheets after the second viewing. The teachers could also use any of the writing activities suggested in the teacher's guide and the utilization packets for children's practice after the program worksheets had been completed.

One second grade teacher and her students comprised the control group. The control group teacher was given the same workshop instruction as the experimental groups, the Fins, Feathers and Fur manual, utilization packets and program objective worksheets. In place of viewing the videotapes, the control group teacher used instructional guidelines from the Fins, Feathers and Fur manual to meet the lesson objectives. After teacher instruction the children completed the program objectives

worksheets. In summary, the control group differed from the experimental group by not using the video programs to introduce aspects of the writing process.

The series, Fins, Feathers and Fur is comprised of 15 fifteen-minute video programs designed to provide adjunct instruction in writing process to primary grade children, specifically second graders. Each program models the writing process in its entirety while highlighting one aspect of the process for instructional purposes. Programs 1-3 highlight the brainstorming and organizing aspects of pre-writing; programs 4-6 highlight drafting processes which include sentence writing, paragraph writing, maintaining topic coherence, expanding sentences through the use of adjectives and time sequencing. In addition, use of punctuation such as the period and question mark and capitalization of first letters and proper names are modeled.

The study began in late October of the school year. Data from six programs which introduced various aspects of brainstorming and drafting is reported.

Data was evaluated both objectively and subjectively. Objective data evaluation was based on children's responses to program objectives through their completion of "program evaluation sheets" and Fins, Feathers and Fur utilization packet worksheets.

Data was collected and analyzed on the 20 specific objectives that were tested in the first six Fins, Feathers and Fur programs. For purposes of data analysis these 20 specific objectives were re-grouped into subcategories of three major areas: Pre-writing, Drafting, and Print Conventions. The subcategories of Pre-writing included Words

and Labels, Multiple Word Descriptors and Idea Webbing; subcategories of Drafting included writing sentences with descriptive words, writing paragraphs using sequencing and writing paragraphs in which three or more sentences were on the same topic; subcategories of Print Conventions included capitalization for first letters in sentences and proper names, use of the period and question mark, and paragraph indenting. Children's responses to program objectives were scored on a correct (having met) or incorrect (not having met) the objective. If the objective was measured more than once a success rate of 65% or above was credited with meeting the objective.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Further analysis of the data was conducted through teacher interviews after they had used the video programs and had children complete the test items. This researcher developed several questions resulting from reviewing the children's responses to tested items and reading their compositions.

Reading and Discussion

Inspection of the data suggested little differences existed among the experimental and the control group for some of the variables, e.g., Words and Labels, Multiple Word Descriptors, Paragraph Writing, Capitalization and Punctuation. Therefore, statistical analysis was not considered necessary for these variables.

Chi Square Analysis was applied to the variables Idea Webbing, Sequencing, and Indenting to determine if significant differences between

the experimental and control group existed. The results of this analysis supported inspectional data with the results reported in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The Chi Square generated by the data in the categories Idea Webbing, Sequencing and Indenting are significant, supporting the effectiveness of ITV in presenting specific process writing objectives.

Subjective data was gathered by interviewing each of the experimental and control group teachers after this experimenter examined the writing products of the 48 children. Questions were open ended and mainly concerned with teachers' viewpoints regarding the use of the video programs as an instructional tool.

The answer to the question, "Will ITV act as a writing motivator and instructional guide for teachers and children?" was answered through direct interviews with teachers. Teachers' responses were positive regarding the program as a writing motivator and instructional guide. Specifically, this examiner posed the following question to the teachers, "Would your children have met the objectives, as tested on the worksheets and utilization guide, if they had not seen the program?" The teachers stated that their children would have met some of the objectives and named Brainstorming (e.g., word labeling and descriptive words), punctuation, capitalization and sentence writing as activities that were part of their classroom instruction in reading and language arts. These statements are supported by inspection of the data in which no differences between experimental and control groups were noted.

The teachers identified webbing, sequencing and the paragraph frame (indenting) as the factors their children could not have completed without viewing the programs. This information is supported by the

Chi Square Analysis which showed a significant difference existed between the experimental and control groups. One teacher (experimental group) indicated that transfer of instructional skills had occurred by stating that she noticed her children using the terms first, next and last "all the time" in their writing. When asked if the children knew how to "idea web" before viewing the program the teachers said, "No". However, they stated that webbing was a good idea for... "Webbing helped children organize their thoughts, sequence information and keep on one topic". The teachers viewed the webbing as a learning experience for themselves as well as their children. They stated that more programs using webbing would have been helpful. The teachers also reported that their children learned about indenting from the "paragraph frame" and this idea was used for the friendly letter form.

If an ITV program is to be used for classroom instruction, is it interesting and will it act as a motivator for writing? This researcher posed the following question to the teachers, "What is the usefulness of these programs for stimulating writing?" The teachers responded that "The introduction of the topics (objectives for each program) was very good. Our training in process writing was only a 2-3 hour workshop." These responses suggest that the programs provided instructional guidelines for process writing which, in fact, eased their concern about teaching "process writing" correctly. In addition, the availability of the programs provided impetus to continue to foster writing instruction in the classroom. The teachers reported that the children enjoyed the programs, that "the pet store theme turned them on right away. There's not a sound in the room.... when the program is on."

In response to the question, "What aspects of this ITV program were most valuable for instruction?" the teachers indicated that new ideas such as word webbing; innovative approaches to instruction such as paragraph framing and direct instruction of difficult concepts such as sequencing were most valuable for instruction. In addition, the teachers reported carry over and use of the ITV techniques in other subject areas such as reading and literature.

Teacher reports were positive regarding the use of this program for classroom instruction in process writing. They reported that the programs were highly motivating for children and instructionally sound. In addition, they were positive about the "inservicing aspect" of the programs. A major difficulty with the ITV program was the mechanics of locating the program to be shown and sharing the research tape with several teachers. However, this is an artifact of the research program and could be eliminated in a non-research setting.

Qualitative analysis of the data, specifically sentence and paragraph writing samples, provide interesting observations for discussion. Children in this study were asked to write a "story" based on one of the writing motivators in the video program. For example, in program 1, the question was, "Write a story about what's in the basket or your favorite part of this program." The children were told to write their responses under this question which headed an 8 x 10 sheet of blank paper. Responses to this question generally were answered in <u>one</u> complete sentence. These responses were compared to "creative writing" samples that had been completed by the children. The creative writing showed that the children could write more than one sentence and had often

filled the front and back of lined paper while writing. Puzzled by the dearth of writing and lack of creativity demonstrated after viewing the video program this researcher questioned the teachers about why this had occurred. The teachers responded that the children viewed the objective worksheet (test) and question on the back of this sheet as very similar to their reading worksheets. Therefore, they responded to this worksheet as if it was a reading worksheet. The teachers stated that the question was a limiting question which did not tap their writing ability. In addition, they stated that prior to creative writing, they always brainstorm words and list them on the chalkboard. Thus they activate children's schema. This information suggests that task format is a very important factor in school instruction. First, children will respond to a limiting question in a limited way. Second, clearly stated guidelines and instructions regarding the intent of the writing assignment must be given to children. Thirdly, the brainstorming process seems to be essential for children to activate words and concepts bout a topic.

The second grade children in this study responded to the task demands and physical structure of different writing assignments. For example, when lined paper was used the children generally filled all

of the lines with writing. Analysis of these compositions indicated that topic coherence was maintained and the motivating question was answered. Pictorial information also seemed to be helpful for recall of the topic and of the information they wanted to write about.

Explicit writing directions provided structure regarding teacher expectations for the writing product. If, for example, the teacher wants children to write and use words to illustrate sequencing, those directions must be directly stated. Even though children may view a video program which shows sequencing or main idea, they will not necessarily use this information in their writing without directions to do so.

Examination of children's work and statistical analysis of program objectives indicate that this ITV series was successful in presenting the stated writing objectives to students. In addition, the series provided teachers with support and structure for teaching the writing process. Data obtained from teacher interviews and observation of the writing samples suggests that structure in the form of brainstorming, explicit teacher directions regarding the writing product, pictures and lined paper resulted in children writing more information about a topic.

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Table 1

Objectives Measured

I. Pre-Writing
   A. Labeling Pictures
   B. Multiple Word Descriptors
   C. Idea Webbing

II. Drafting
   A. adjectives (sentences)
   B. sequencing (sentences)
   c. paragraph writing

III. Print Conventions
   A. capitalization
   B. punctuation
   c. shape of paragraph (indenting)